

What is claimed is:

Claims

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1. A method of providing access to at least one data file using a computer system on-board a passenger vehicle or craft, said on-board computer system being accessible by means of a plurality of on-board computer workstations, the method comprising the steps of:

10 receiving into said on-board computer system at least one data file previously stored in a personal computer; and

enabling access to the at least one data file in said on-board computer system by means of at least one of the on-board computer workstations, which access is enabled in accordance with identification information inputted to said on-board
15 computer system.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of receiving into said on-board computer system at least one data file previously stored in a personal computer comprises receiving said at least one data file from a check-in computer system to
20 which said at least one data file has been transferred from a personal computer.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the identification information inputted to said on-board computer system is received with said at least one data file.

25 4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the identification information inputted to said on-board computer system identifies at least one on-board computer workstation, said at least one data file thereafter being accessible from said on-board computer system only by means of those on-board computer workstations specified in the identification data.

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5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the identification information inputted to said on-board computer system relates to a user's predetermined seat number, said at

least one data file thereafter being accessible from said on-board computer system only by means of the at least one on-board computer workstation associated with the user's predetermined seat number.

5 6. A method according to claim 3, wherein the identification information inputted to said on-board computer system identifies a user password associated with said at least one data file, said at least one data file thereafter being accessible from said on-board computer system only by means of those on-board computer workstations where the password is entered using an input device associated with the workstation.

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7. A method according to claim 6, further comprising determining if said at least one data file is encrypted, and in the event of a positive determination, decrypting the at least one encrypted data file at the on-board computer system in accordance with a decryption password entered at at least one of the on-board computer workstations, said
15 at least one decrypted data file being accessible only by means of those computer workstations where the decryption password is entered.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of receiving into said on-board computer system at least one data file previously stored in a personal computer
20 comprises operating a reading device on-board the vehicle or craft to read said at least one data file from a portable storage medium, to which said at least one data file was previously transferred from the personal computer, to said on-board computer system.

9. A method according to claim 1, further comprising transferring said at least
25 one data file from the on-board computer system to a personal computer external to the vehicle or craft.

10. A method of transferring at least one data file to a computer system on-board a passenger vehicle or craft, which on-board computer system is accessible by means of a
30 plurality of on-board computer workstations, the method comprising the steps of:

transferring the at least one data file from a personal computer to the on-board computer system; and

providing identification information to said on-board computer system so as to indicate at least one on-board computer workstation by which said at least one data file may be accessed.

5 11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the step of transferring said at least one data file from the personal computer to said on-board computer system comprises: transferring said at least one data file from the personal computer to a check-in computer system; at the check-in computer system, adding the identification information to said at least one data file; and transferring said at least one data file and
10 the added identification information to said on-board computer system.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the step of adding identification information to said at least one data file comprises adding data identifying at least one of the on-board computer workstations such that said at least one data file is thereafter
15 accessible from the on-board computer only by means of those on-board computer workstations specified in the identification data.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the check-in computer system is located external to the vehicle or craft, and the identification data is generated in
20 accordance with a user's check-in information.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the identification data is generated in accordance with the user's predetermined seat number such that said at least one data file is accessible only by means of those on-board computer workstations associated
25 with the user's seat number.

15. A method according to claim 11, wherein the step of adding identification information to said at least one data file comprises assigning a user password to said at least one data file such that said at least one data file is thereafter accessible from said
30 on-board computer system only by means of those on-board computer workstations to which the user password is entered using an input device associated with the at least one workstation.

16. A method according to claim 15, wherein said at least one data file is encrypted prior to being transferred to the on-board computer system, and wherein said at least one data file may be decrypted in accordance with the user password being entered at at least one of the on-board computer workstations such that said at least one decrypted data file is accessible only by means of those computer workstations where the user password is entered.

17. A method according to claim 15, wherein the check-in computer system is located external to the passenger vehicle or craft, the user password being specific to the user who transfers said at least one data file to the check-in computer system.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein the user password is generated randomly at the check-in computer system and is thereafter identified to the user.

19. A method according to claim 18, wherein, after the user password is randomly generated, the user password is printed onto a pass for user collection.

20. A method according to claim 17, wherein the user password is specified by the user prior to boarding the vehicle or craft.

21. A method according to claim 11, wherein the step of adding identification information to said at least one data file comprises (i) adding, to said at least one data file, data specifying at least one of the on-board computer workstations, and (ii) assigning a user password to said at least one data file, such that said at least one data file may thereafter be accessed from the on-board computer only by means of those on-board computer workstations which are specified in the added data, and to which the user password is entered using an input device associated with the at least one workstation.

22. A method according to claim 10, wherein the step of transferring said at least one data file from the personal computer to said on-board computer system comprises:

transferring said at least one data file from the personal computer to a portable storage medium for subsequent transfer to said on-board computer system by means of an on-board reading device.

5 23. A method according to claim 22, wherein the portable storage device is a CD-ROM so as to enable subsequent transfer by means of an on-board CD-ROM reading device.

24. A method according to claim 22, wherein the portable storage device is a
10 floppy disk so as to enable subsequent transfer by means of an on-board floppy disk drive.

25. A computer network on-board a passenger vehicle or craft, the computer network comprising: a first data port; an on-board computer system connected to the
15 first port; and a plurality of on-board workstations connected to said on-board computer system, said on-board computer system being arranged to receive at least one data file from a personal computer by means of the first port, and to enable access to the at least one data file on said on-board computer system by means of at least one on-board computer workstation, said on-board computer system being arranged to enable access
20 in accordance with identification information contained in the at least one data file.

26. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein the identification information specifies at least one of the on-board computer workstations, the on-board computer system being arranged to enable access to said at least one data file only by
25 means of those computer workstations specified.

27. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein the identification information comprises a user password assigned to said at least one data file, said on-board computer system allowing access to said at least one data file by means of only
30 those on-board computer workstations where the user password is entered using an input device associated with the at least one workstation.

28. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein said first data port is configured to be connectable to an external check-in computer system to which the personal computer can be connected.

5 29. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein said first data port is a storage media reading device arranged to read data files from a portable storage device.

30. A computer network according to claim 29, wherein said reading device is a disk drive.

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31. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein said first data port is further arranged to transmit data from said on-board computer system to a personal computer located external to the vehicle or craft.

15 32. A computer network according to claim 25, wherein the on-board computer workstations each comprise a display and a user input device.

33. A computer network according to claim 32, wherein said display is mounted on the reverse side of a passenger seat.

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34. A computer network according to claim 32, wherein said user input device comprises a keyboard mounted on a frame pivotally attached to the reverse side of a passenger seat, the frame being pivotable between a first position whereby the keyboard can be operated, and a second position whereby the keyboard is stowed away.

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35. A passenger vehicle comprising a computer network according to claim 25.